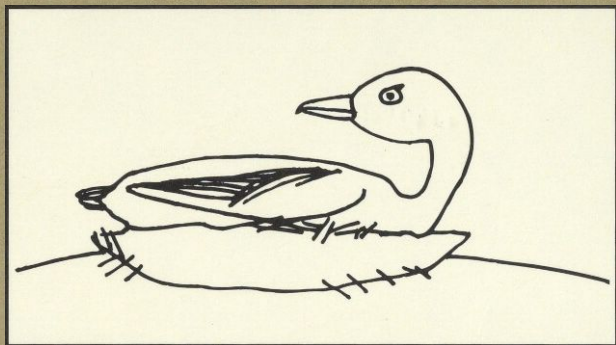


# THE MIND'S EYE

A Liberal Arts Journal  
Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts



**Francisco Ferrer:**  
*Assessing the Legacy of a Spanish Iconoclast and Teacher*  
By Roselle K. Chartock

**On Becoming a Teacher and Practicing the Craft:**  
*A Journey from the '60s Through the '90s*  
An interview with Bob Bence by Maynard Seider

**Another Look at the Sea:**  
*Winslow Homer and Stephen Crane*  
Art Notes by Tony Gengarelly

**Herring Season**  
By Robin O'Sullivan

**Poetry by**  
Hilary Russell

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*The Mind's Eye*, a journal of scholarly and creative work, is published twice annually by the faculty of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. While emphasizing articles of scholarly merit, *The Mind's Eye* focuses on a general communication of ideas of interest to a liberal arts college. We welcome expository essays, including reviews, as well as fiction, poetry and art. Please refer to the inside back cover for a list of writer's guidelines.

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On the cover: Drawing by Professor Gregory Scheckler, Massachusetts  
College of Liberal Arts Fine and Performing Arts Department

## Editor's File

For this issue of *The Mind's Eye* we are most fortunate to have a wonderful variety of pieces that touch in diverse ways on the theme of education. The lead article by Roselle Chartock on the innovative educator Francisco Ferrer explores the broader implications of institutional learning. Maynard Seider's penetrating interview with Bob Bence reveals the personal and professional background of an outstanding teacher. The learning curve is extended with an article on Winslow Homer and Stephen Crane, who were involved in a kind of naturalistic education as they looked to the sea for answers to some of the big philosophical questions of their day. Then Robin O'Sullivan takes us on a journey of personal learning through a reflective trip to Alaska that turns out to be more than just a visit to her sister. Finally, poet Hilary Russell makes us ponder the implications of simple acts that become metaphorical teachers.

As much as we have enjoyed publishing the work of our colleagues and others who have favored us with submissions to the journal, material considerations—namely a budgetary shortfall at the college this year—plus uncertainty over the retention of a Managing Editor may well force us to curtail the future publication of *The Mind's Eye*. If such be the case, we would like to extend our thanks to the college and to the journal's authors and artists for making this four-year run such a rewarding experience. Hoping that our concerns are premature, we still welcome the submission of articles, creative fiction and artwork. The deadline for the Spring 2001 edition is January 15.

Tony Gengarely  
Managing Editor

# Francisco Ferrer:

## *Assessing the Legacy of a Spanish Iconoclast and Teacher*

BY ROSELLE K. CHARTOCK

"The whole value of education lies in respect for the physical, intellectual and moral will of the child . . . [and] in appealing in a higher degree to the energies of the child himself."

— Francisco Ferrer

The words of Francisco Ferrer (1859–1909), an iconoclastic Spanish educator and founder of the Escuela Moderna, or Modern School, movement in Spain in 1901, echo the sentiments of his contemporary, the American icon of progressive education, John Dewey (1859–1952). But while Dewey's views have been published extensively, Ferrer's views and the term "modern school" are noticeably missing from the literature of education history (Cremin, Ellis, Hessong and Weeks, Johnson et al., Webb et al., Ozman and Craver, Pulliam and Van Patten).

The purpose of this article is twofold: first to assess Ferrer's contribution to educational reform in Spain and beyond and the early influences that led to his revolutionary ideas and, second, to explain why

publishers of educational history texts ignore Ferrer's influence while including the work of several other European reformers, even radical reformers, such as Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) and Dr. Maria Montessori (1870–1952).

The most striking differences between Ferrer and other historical reformers lie in his philosophical anarchism and in the nature of his demise. On October 13, 1909, at the age of 50, Ferrer was executed by a firing squad, having been convicted of being "author and chief" of what was known as the "Revolution of July" in Barcelona (Archer 1), an alleged attempt to overthrow the Spanish monarchy. Putting aside his sensational death for the moment, the fact is that Ferrer held the same views as other European and American reformers who rejected the authoritarianism of the conventional classroom and instead favored the kind of student-centered, holistic education that encourages active methods of learning, creativity, manual skills and self-reliance. According to his supporters, Ferrer almost single-handedly attempted to bring the backward public schools of Spain into the modern age for children who could not afford private education (*Times* 1, Avrigh). He became a threat to the established order, however, when he went beyond his progressive contemporaries and taught his students to despise the Church and the monarchy that dominated Spain at the time.

*The New York Times* revealed its own anticlerical, antimonarchy bias in its lengthy article reporting Ferrer's execution. The paper blamed the two most powerful institutions in Spain for ignoring a system "such as the Middle Ages would have prescribed" (*Times* 1), where some school buildings were "no more than stables into which the children came after the animals had been taken out to pasture" (Archer 30).

The paper went on to extol to the point of hyperbole Ferrer's role in reforming Spanish education: "Efforts to bring in a more modern system [had] failed, failed at least until Ferrer made them successful. But in making these efforts successful—in founding fully 100 modern and secular [coeducational] schools throughout Spain, and carrying them to fruition in spite of the established order, and in promising that this system would be extended beyond the primary to the university course—Ferrer won the enmity of men too powerful to be long resisted in Spain" (*Times* 1).

William Archer, a biographer of Ferrer, is more critical. He doesn't question Ferrer's sincere dedication to school reform but, rather, his underlying motives. Writes Archer, "There is nothing to show that Ferrer had a genius for education in any large and liberal sense of the term. He conceived it simply as an instrument of propaganda, a weapon of social and economic enfranchisement" (Archer 247). Further, Archer, who calls Ferrer's vision "narrow" (248), believes that Ferrer's educational views would have had minimal impact had it not been for his sensational trial and execution. He believes that the rich and powerful to whom Ferrer's ideas were a threat could easily have fought him on the educational territory they claimed as their own. The fact that they chose instead to combat his ideas and methods with "the gag and garotte" is, in Archer's opinion, what gave Ferrer the status of martyr and educational genius (Archer 248).

While Archer may be right, there are others who believe that it was, indeed, the depth and validity of Ferrer's educational principles that led to the protest movements among his sympathizers in political, literary and educational circles throughout Europe and the United States. Under a banner headline, *The New York Times* of October 17, 1909, explained that the movement against Ferrer's execution "did not grow out of anger about the disregard of the simplest forms of justice which Spain [had] shown in killing Ferrer virtually without trial" but, rather, "because of the sympathy of cultured men with the man who has done more than anyone else to introduce modern education into benighted Spain; it is chiefly due to a feeling that it is because of these efforts of his for modern education, and not because of any of the anarchistic doctrines he may have possessed, that Ferrer has been done to death" (*Times* 1).

The early influences that led Ferrer to become an "uncompromising idealist" (Archer 248) varied. The son of a fairly well-to-do farmer, Ferrer attended the local municipal school in Alella, 12 miles from Barcelona. Like many government-run schools during the 1860s, this school was devoid of stimuli. It didn't even have the crucifix, pictures of saints or the hymn to the Spanish flag that would become common decoration by 1909. But there was still no playground and the schoolmaster still earned less than the equivalent of \$30 a year, and this region was better off than most others in Spain.

Ferrer left school at the age of 12 to go to work for a corn and seed merchant who exposed him to anticlerical attitudes (Archer 5). And from an even earlier age he had heard stories from a favorite uncle about revolutionary conspiracies to overthrow the monarchy (Archer 4). Such were the influences that led Ferrer to take up a political struggle using education as the major weapon "to fight against the forces that ruled at the expense of others" (Archer 5).

At the age of 20, Ferrer was working for the Madrid, Saragossa and Alicante Railway Company as a ticket inspector, and soon after starting the job, married a woman he had met on the train. Ferrer remained employed with the company until 1885, when he resigned and moved to Paris for reasons that remain unclear. His years in Paris, according to Archer, were years of struggle (Archer 5). By 1889, he was trying to support four children and deal with domestic problems, while at the same time beginning to earn a living teaching Spanish. He also acted as unpaid secretary to Ruiz Zorrilla, the Republican leader in exile in Geneva until Zorrilla's death in 1895. Interestingly, Ferrer was acquiring some reputation as a teacher when his marriage fell apart, and quite publicly. His wife, in 1894, went after him with a gun and fired two shots at Ferrer. (But this is a story for another time. She was a poor shot, and the court released her because it was a first offense.)

It may have been, in part, due to the collapse of his family life that Ferrer underwent a change. He severed many of the ties he'd had with the Republican Revolutionary Parties and devoted more time to his teaching. Ferrer came to believe that political revolution could not take place as long as more than half of his countrymen were illiterate and the rest received education that was "miserable in both methods and spirit" (Archer 19).

It was around the time of the collapse of his marriage that Ferrer became reacquainted with a Mlle. Meunier, who had taken Spanish lessons from him several years earlier. She believed in his educational goals, and they, along with the woman to whom Ferrer was then engaged, became frequent companions. The three returned together to Barcelona, where on September 8, 1901, Ferrer started his first classes for children (Archer 59). Meunier was committed to endowing Ferrer's

educational work—despite her strong connection to the Catholic Church—and when she died in 1901, she left him a small fortune and her home, where he established the first Escuela Moderna. Within a year, Ferrer expanded his schools beyond Barcelona. In order to spread his own modern, and in some cases revolutionary, teachings, Ferrer started a small publishing house that also released translations of the works of scientists and educators who, like Ferrer, believed in “rational and scientific teaching . . . which humanizes and dignifies” (*Times* 5). In addition, he issued a monthly *Bulletin* of the Escuela Moderna that was disseminated widely and contained the clearest expressions of his philosophy.

Interestingly, John Dewey’s works may have been among those translated by Ferrer’s press. While there is no indication that they knew of each other, there are reasons to believe they did. For example, several Americans who participated in the massive protests that followed Ferrer’s execution in 1909 were Dewey’s close professional associates and friends. They included Emma Goldman, “the most famous and articulate anarchist in America” (Avrich 37), the muckraker Upton Sinclair, author of *The Jungle*, and lawyer Clarence Darrow, all of whom worked to keep Ferrer’s Modern School legacy alive. After Ferrer’s execution, several protest meetings were held, one in Philadelphia and another in New York’s Carnegie Hall. “The Socialists . . . [tried] to get eminent men of all parties to take part in the speechmaking” (*Times* 5). According to Peter Avrich, who appears to have done the most comprehensive research to date on Ferrer’s legacy, Goldman did more than anyone else to keep alive America’s interest in Ferrer, and she was among those who, along with Darrow and Sinclair, organized the Francisco Ferrer Association on June 3, 1910, which went on to open a school based on Ferrer’s Modern School model (Avrich 36–38).

Another connection between Dewey and Ferrer—or at least Ferrer’s legacy—is evident in a visit by Dewey to Marietta Pierce Johnson’s “School of Organic Education” founded in 1907 in Fairhope, Alabama, and characterized by a student-centered, informal atmosphere that emphasized student inquiry and freedom of expression. The school was a precursor of the American Modern Schools move-

ment inspired after Ferrer's execution. The Alabama school's innovations—among them the elimination of exams and report cards, which Mrs. Johnson believed led to children's feeling the stigma of failure—attracted “the interest of many progressive educators, among them John Dewey, who came to Fairhope for a firsthand look and devoted a chapter of his *Schools of Tomorrow* (1915) to Mrs. Johnson's experiment” (Avrich 57). And, further, several students who studied under Dewey at Columbia, including Lilian Rifkin and Gray Wu, went on to teach at the Ferrer School in Stelton, New Jersey, which had become a Ferrer colony of year-round inhabitants by 1920 and to which visitors from New York, Philadelphia and other cities came to take part in “discussions and entertainments” (Avrich 244). John Dewey was among the visitors to the colony during its early years.\*

With evidence of links between Dewey and Ferrer and the subsequent creation of schools devoted to Ferrer's legacy comes the still unanswered question: Why has Ferrer's work been lost to teachers? The answer may lie in the striking similarities between a monarchistic Spain and an allegedly democratic America. The fact is that Ferrer's anarchism and radical politics challenged not only the Catholic Church and the monarchy in Spain, but also *American* political and religious institutions. For even though American society, in general, was, by the early 20th century, defined by democratic values, and even though the 19th century gave rise to the establishment of free public education, nevertheless, there still remained in America a serious problem: a very wide gap between the rich and the poor. Growing unrest among the American working class had led to massive strikes and protests pressuring the government into passing reforms to relieve the growing frustration and potential for revolution. That historical period of reform, referred to as “the progressive era” (1898–1917), evolved as a result of outcries against economic, political and social injustices, not

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\*The Stelton School operated until 1953 and, along with some 20 other such schools, lost some of its radical emphasis and evolved into a school associated with Dewey's progressive education movement. All of these schools finally collapsed by the end of the 1950s. “Since that time Rutgers [University, a stone's throw from the former colony] has become the repository of the Ferrer movement archives” (Avrich 351).

so different from the outcries heard but ignored by the Spanish monarchy at that time (Archer 119–32). And both before and during that period of protest in America, there had been instances of repression similar to the execution of Ferrer in Spain. A majority of Americans, like the majority in Spain and elsewhere, feared anarchists, and both countries share a history of unjust prosecution and execution of men and women associated with anarchistic ideas. For example, years before Ferrer's trial in Spain, a Chicago judge and jury condemned to death a group of anarchists who had been framed for setting off a bomb in Haymarket Square, where a rally had been called to participate in a May 1, 1886, general strike for the eight-hour day. Four of the defendants were hanged, the other four imprisoned. Illinois governor John Peter Altgeld researched the trial and found it to have been a travesty of justice. So he made the brave decision to pardon the remaining defendants. The decision cost him his political career. An angry and outspoken upper class, fearing the radicals, called Altgeld an anarchist and effectively silenced this man whom John F. Kennedy profiled in his book *Profiles in Courage*.

Again in the 1920s, a few years after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and a decade after Ferrer's execution, fears of communism and anarchy led to a Red Scare in America, and anarchists and radicals were rounded up and incarcerated without due process. Two of those radicals, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were tried for murdering a paymaster and a guard during a \$15,000 payroll robbery at South Braintree, Massachusetts, in April of 1920. Despite shaky evidence by the prosecution and convincing evidence of their innocence (after their death, the Justice Department in Boston submitted sworn affidavits that the government knew Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent but prosecuted them exclusively for their political beliefs), the two were found guilty and sentenced to death (Cooney and Michalowski 66). Their execution on August 23, 1927, resulted in the same massive protests around the world that had followed Ferrer's in 1909.

With this common political history in mind, there is the likelihood that American educational publishers, who generally like to maintain a safe distance from controversy, considered Ferrer and his work in Spain to be too inflammatory for their textbooks. Ron Miller, in his

book on holistic education, *What Are Schools For?*, explains why certain radical educators' views have been ignored. Notes Miller, "The guardians of culture dismiss anarchists, like all romantics, as foolish, sentimental rebels who simply cannot accept legitimate authority or the needs of an organized society" (Miller 123). Miller argues that this casual dismissal obscures the useful critiques of society that the radicals may be making. "By dismissing social criticism as 'un-American' (and in Ferrer's case as 'un-Spanish'), [the guardians] ensure that it will not be taken seriously. In fact," Miller believes, "anarchists made some very penetrating criticism about American culture" (Miller 123-4).

It is now nearly the centennial of Ferrer's death. Reconsidering his dedication to establishing quality education in Spain and his impressive following in the United States among noted intellectuals, perhaps the time has come for a graduate student or education scholar to do some serious probing into Ferrer's legacy. With the possibilities of such validation, Ferrer may be able to take his place in the literature alongside current iconoclasts who, like Ferrer, have challenged the inequities of authoritarian approaches to teaching and learning (Friere, Gatto, Holt, Illich, Kozol, Neill).

On the other hand, further scrutiny may prove that Ferrer's legacy does not qualify him to stand beside these contemporary critics. If we were to adopt the perspective of William Archer, Ferrer's first biographer, we would conclude that, had his enemies in high places just left him in peace, Ferrer might have reopened his school for another 20 years and died quietly, leaving behind him some repute as an educator. But, believes Archer, Ferrer certainly would never have gained worldwide fame and the label "martyr of free thought" (Archer 252), had he not met his death by firing squad in 1909.

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# On Becoming a Teacher and Practicing the Craft: *A Journey from the '60s Through the '90s*

An interview with Bob Bence

BY MAYNARD SEIDER

As part of an inaugural series of essays and interviews focusing on teaching, veteran political science professor Bob Bence (**B**) was interviewed by *Mind's Eye* Editorial Board member Maynard Seider (**S**) during the summer of 1999. Bob Bence has served as chair of the Department of History, Political Science and Geography and twice received the Distinguished Service Award from the college, as well as the Faculty Association Senior Faculty Award. Bob lives in Stamford, Vermont, with his wife, Ellen Doyle, former director of the MCLA Counseling Center, and their son, John.

Born in 1944 in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, Bob grew up in Marion Center, a very small town "in the heart of northern Appalachia." His parents had graduated from high school during the Depression, and Bob became the first member of his family to attend college. Our edited transcript picks up at that point.

**S:** When you were in high school, were most of your peers thinking of attending college?

**B:** Probably less than half actually thought about going to college. Most went to work, primarily in the coal mines. The group of people I tended to gravitate to were like-minded people, so most of my immediate friends were considering college and a career in teaching. At that time, you went to college for practical purposes and teaching appeared to be the most obvious career choice.

**S:** It was a career that was growing and in which one could get a job.

**B:** Those were baby boomer times. There was a dearth of teachers and it was quite easy to get a job.

**S:** What did you know about the kinds of colleges that were out there? Were your guidance counselors helpful?

**B:** I didn't receive much information from my guidance counselor. I simply went to college fairs and responded to athletic recruiters—basketball coaches, of course. It's a handicap coming from a family that doesn't know much about education, and you really don't have much help in sorting all that out. Even if children do come from a privileged background, I'm not sure most students understand or have a good basis for choice. I'm always amazed at why people choose the institutions they do. Much is by accident, or running into the right person at the right time, often influenced by peer decisions.

**S:** Did you play varsity basketball in high school?

**B:** Yes.

**S:** You can tell us on the record how you were as a ballplayer. A lot of people see you around here and know, of course.

**B:** I did fine and the school did well. Again, it was a small town with an extremely small high school and sports were the cultural center of

the community. In retrospect, I have mixed feelings about competitive sports. They can cause some real damage, but for me, it was the easiest path to self-esteem and confidence. There weren't many alternative activities that one could have chosen.

**S:** Did your basketball playing bring you into contact with coaches and colleges that you might not have thought of?

**B:** Yes, that's correct. I went to summer basketball camps and did some other sports-related travel. As a parent and as an educator, I think back now on my youth, trying to expand my children's and students' experience bases, how this is a necessary process for those of us who grew up in fairly poor, rural areas. So there are all kinds of things that one can do. The easier avenue for me, at that point, was sports. You got to travel a bit and see what the world looked like outside your own minuscule environment.

**S:** Traveling outside western Pennsylvania?

**B:** Yes, I at least got to eastern Ohio and traveled in the Middle Atlantic states quite a bit. I had scholarships to a couple of schools. Virginia Military Institute was one of them. Fortunately, at that age, I knew I wasn't a soldier. VMI would have changed my life and taken me in a different direction, possibly now having to defend gender segregation.

**S:** So what was your choice of college?

**B:** I chose a local school, simply because it was close and didn't seem like much of a leap. I think it takes something special for students, at least 18-year-olds, to go far away from home, at least at that time it did in that kind of community. I admire the courage of people in that age range who go to school 3000 miles away and have some kind of summer experience overseas. I think that is one of the things I find here at this college. It's difficult to get people to leave Massachusetts for a short time, sometimes even for a weekend, and I'd like to see more students take some risks and study overseas, do some exchange programs, work in New York City and challenge themselves, abandon the security arrangements they're so comfortable with.

**S:** And the school you went to was Indiana University of Pennsylvania?

**B:** Yes, that's correct.

**S:** A state college in Indiana, Pennsylvania. Could you tell us about the size of the town, and the people?

**B:** About 12,000 people. It's in the center of a mining area about 15 miles from my home. It's probably most famous as the home of Jimmy Stewart, the actor. There's now a Jimmy Stewart Museum in Indiana. His father was in the same business as my father. The university had what universities usually offer, but it was in a transitional stage from a normal school/state teachers college/state college to a university, so it was still fairly focused on education. But still, it was a world away from what I was used to.

**S:** Were you a dormitory student?

**B:** No, I stayed at a private residence with three other students. We rented rooms in a house. My father was concerned about dorms. He wanted me to stay near the college but thought I needed a little more sheltering than a dorm might provide. I didn't care either way.

**S:** Did he know the house owner?

**B:** No, just went through the want ads.

**S:** Were you more sheltered than in a dorm?

**B:** Good question! We didn't drink in the house and I liked the family quite a bit and became close to the people who lived with us, my roommates/housemates.

**S:** Have you stayed in touch with them?

**B:** No, it's amazing how few friends from my sordid past I have stayed in touch with over the years. I think about them, a lot.

**S:** Did you move into a dorm?

**B:** No, I got married when I was a senior and moved into an apartment with my wife.

**S:** So you started college around '62 and graduated around '66. What do you remember most about those four years?

**B:** I remember growing. I think the first couple of years, academically, were somewhat lost on me. All of us have developmental levels that proceed at various paces, and I don't think it was until I was a junior that I made connections with faculty, subjects and courses. By the time I was a senior, I felt somewhat academic, somewhat scholarly. But it took a long time. It is not easy for 18- or 19-year-olds to understand scholarship, what learning is all about, why French history counts for anything, or any other subject that seems fairly esoteric and abstract. Of course, I played basketball, too.

**S:** You played basketball throughout college. Much traveling?

**B:** Mostly within Pennsylvania and neighboring states.

**S:** How much time did that take?

**B:** It didn't seem excessive, but I was a person with few hobbies, so, in fact, it didn't seem terribly time-consuming. I think with university level sports, my experience was that people dropped in and out of them and there were very few people who started when I did who remained on the team for four years. People transferred in and out of school. I think when I was a senior there were only two of us who had started on the team as freshmen. So basketball, in a sense, seemed like a fairly tenuous, rootless kind of experience for me. As far as bonding or developing long-lasting friendships, there simply wasn't the consistency.

**S:** In terms of getting into academia and scholarship, you said by the time you were a junior you had moved in that direction. Was it a teacher or a course, or something that gradually evolved?

**B:** I think gradual evolution is probably the most appropriate phrase. I do remember some professors, one in particular, who brought home the difference between personal criticism and scholarly criticism. I remember some who actually taught me to be an individual and asked me what I thought. That was sort of symbiotic, too, because I think I was contributing and reading. I think, too, that 18- or 19-year-olds and even older people sometimes personalize the courses they have and spend a lot of time talking about "the professor," rather than the subject, although professorial personalities are not unimportant. There is a process that takes place where you begin to see there is something more important than personalities going on.

**S:** Were you majoring in political science then?

**B:** No, at that point, like everyone else I knew, I was majoring in education, social science education.

**S:** Right; you wanted to be a teacher.

**B:** I was taking all kinds of courses—political science courses, history courses, economics, sociology. Sort of a nice idea, since we tend to segment subjects a bit too much.

**S:** Were you doing practice teaching by the time you were a senior?

**B:** Yes.

**S:** How did that work for you?

**B:** Made me realize that it would be difficult to be a teacher, especially at the middle school or junior high level. I had a difficult time trying to discipline. I was either too passive or overreacting, and I found that consumed an amazing amount of time. However, it was a good experience and I had a wonderful mentor who was a very bright person. High school teaching seemed like something I could do, but I was not certain it was what my life should be about.

**S:** Did you begin teaching after you graduated?

**B:** No, at the end of my senior year, my basketball coach asked if I would like to stay around and be an assistant coach. He said, "We can provide you with a stipend and you can stay and get a master's degree." So it seemed like a nice way to postpone my career.

**S:** And what did you get the master's in?

**B:** In education, since at that point it was the only graduate degree that existed at that place. So I got a master's in social science with the intention of becoming a teacher and probably also a basketball coach. People often choose careers based on what they see other folks doing. I hadn't seen people doing many things. Certainly, of all I had witnessed as a kid, being a basketball coach seemed the most fun.

**S:** What was the coaching experience like under your Indiana coach?

**B:** Fairly dull! I'm a player, not a coach, really. I've coached off and on since then, but it's much more fun to play. I think I spent most of my coaching time practicing with the team.

**S:** I know you teach a course now on Vietnam and the '60s. What were the '60s like when you were an undergraduate at Indiana?

**B:** Again, context here was the community of Indiana and Appalachia. The '60s, at that point, really hadn't reached Indiana. So when I graduated in '66, all healthy males were bused to Pittsburgh for a draft induction physical, which I quite enjoyed—one of the best days I've ever spent in my life. It was quite fun!

**S:** The physical or the drive to Pittsburgh?

**B:** Well, being with all of those people and being sarcastic and cynical, somewhat aloof from the process and telling jokes. In '66 in Indiana, there were no protests, no public displays regarding the war,

no professors who said anything. None of my fellow senior males had any criticism of the war at all. I don't think there is any such thing as absolute independent thought. You need the right environment, you need influential people, you need to have something impact you. So I just went along for the ride there. I would certainly have been concerned had I been drafted. My father turns out to be fairly important here, too. He did not want me to go to war. I had to leave that community to experience the '60s. I almost had to get close to the '70s before I could experience at least the politics of the '60s. Even the social issues, be it drugs, free love, gender equity, racism—none of that had really permeated much of my little society.

**S:** People were obviously aware there was a civil rights movement, the beginning of an antiwar movement, but was it something you read about in the newspaper?

**B:** Absolutely, but it was quite removed. Again, you have to trust your memory, but I was extremely unaware. No one I knew talked about it. At that point, I was not talking to people from very diverse backgrounds.

**S:** Did you leave after your master's degree?

**B:** After that master's degree, I decided it was time to get a job. There was a shortage of teachers, so I got a job I felt I wasn't qualified for, teaching world history at a state college in central West Virginia—Glenville State College. I managed to find a place even more isolated than my hometown. However, the '60s *did* eventually reach Glenville, West Virginia. We had protests, moratoriums. . . . [They] closed down the school after presenting 22 nonnegotiable demands! This was '67, '68. That was pretty interesting. I met people from other places, too. My officemate was from Berkeley. In the first two weeks of school, he refused to stand up for *The Star-Spangled Banner* and spit on the Air Force recruiter! That was a fairly eye-opening experience for me, having come from a patriotic, fairly submissive community.

**S:** How did you feel about all that?

**B:** I think people have core values and normally stay with them for a while. My core values are getting along with people, solving problems. But also, one of my core values is humanity, also peacefulness. The antiwar movement was real attractive that way; however, spitting on Air Force recruiters—well, that sort of scared me! Something totally outside my experience base. Not a nice thing to do, as well as particularly risky with regard to the consequences. But it was good for me to be challenged. And, as you know, if you lived through this period, one of the great things about the '60s was that eventually you had to say what you believed, as it was difficult to go somewhere in academia and not have someone ask you what you thought, not have someone be angry, emotional, passionate, and want to know what your response was to those feelings, and so, the '60s caught up with me in, of all places, central West Virginia. One was forced to read and clarify thoughts, and students asked you what you thought—it was nice that way. Something I miss today. Very seldom do we get challenged externally and have to promote, defend, explain our beliefs.

**S:** How long were you in Glenville?

**B:** Two years.

**S:** Did the kind of protest that was happening on the outside, the kind of questioning that was happening on the outside, directly affect the classroom?

**B:** Absolutely. By that point, I was teaching American Government. Every American Government text by '68, '69, was mentioning Vietnam, and that was on people's minds. Of course, there were the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy while I was teaching. Those were powerful media experiences, regardless of where you lived. Replayed over and over. I also spent a summer in North Carolina at the University of North Carolina. I went to hear George Wallace speak, went to hear some civil rights workers. That was a very segregated place and my introduction to institutional racism.

**S:** Was Chapel Hill still segregated in '68?

**B:** Absolutely. African-Americans were bused into work in the morning and bused out at night.

**S:** Were you taking summer school classes?

**B:** Yes, I was at, of all things, an institute in political science, with a Cold War orientation, sponsored by the National Education Defense Act. But it was wonderful and turned out to be a fairly subversive program, paid for by the federal government! But it was also an introduction to heavy-duty political science, philosophy, behaviorism and political activism, all in one not so neatly tied package.

**S:** Were these graduate credit courses?

**B:** Yes.

**S:** And this was '68, so Wallace was running for President. What was that like, hearing him speak?

**B:** I was a bit shocked. It was at a tobacco auction house and my wife and I went—she was pregnant, which I think probably saved us. There were all these tobacco farmers who sat still when *The Star-Spangled Banner* was played but went crazy when *Dixie* was played. When Wallace came out, well, I'd seen evangelists before, when I was growing up, but this was political evangelism. There was no intellectual content to it at all, pure faith and emotion, and it brought home to me the reality of that really angry populism that Wallace represented.

**S:** Do you remember what he said?

**B:** He ran off the clichés that he usually did, you know: "A student lies down in front of my car, it will be the last time he lies down in front of anyone's car. Take all the pointy-headed bureaucrats out and shoot them." It was a fairly violent speech and I remember at the end he said, "Well, it's gonna rain and I've gotta quit"—and it rained! It was

almost like he commanded it to rain! Again, you grow and develop, hopefully people do, you take these experiences and combine the things you read and begin to be aware of social class, too, that it isn't just race. I had also heard someone else speak about the same time, saying that if black Americans and Wallace supporters ever got together, they would realize just how much they had in common. That was sort of an eye-opener, too. I had never, even as a university student, talked about class. This was good, I was seeing this firsthand, it became important to me. The day after I saw George Wallace speak, I saw Eugene McCarthy in a parade during his campaign for the Presidency—a very different platform, different audience, mainly students. The only bumper sticker I ever put on a car was a McCarthy daisy.

**S:** I think I remember those.

**B:** I had met McCarthy earlier, back in Indiana. He had debated John Stennis, a Senator from Mississippi, on the role of government, but it was a very sterile debate. The two people obviously liked each other, so it wasn't very much fun. Now, the way political debating works, it would be different.

**S:** Did you work for McCarthy?

**B:** No; when I went back to West Virginia, there were no organizations, there was only the traditional Democratic Party. Everything went through the Democratic Party. There were, other than episodic, sort of sporadic movements, no organizations whatsoever there. Anyone coming in from the outside would have been looked at suspiciously. There simply wasn't the opportunity.

**S:** How did the election in '68 turn out in your part of West Virginia?

**B** (*laughing*): Democrats always won! Whoever wins the primary. . . .

**S:** Was Wallace much of a factor there?

**B:** No, not at that point. I think he would be now, and might have been in '72, I'm not sure. No, it was pretty much a Democratic primary. Also, the elections were fairly corrupt. Votes were bought.

**S:** Speaking of that, thinking back to your experiences at Indiana, it sounds like a working-class institution—you know, students graduating and getting on the bus to go to Pittsburgh to get their draft medical exam. That probably wouldn't happen at other institutions with upper-middle-class, upper-class kids. They might have other ways of getting out of the draft. I wonder if that was a major issue around there.

**B:** I think there could have been some class traits involved in that sort of passive acceptance of the draft. I certainly see it more as a result of the era or the time. Had it been the following year, I don't think it would have been the same—'67 as opposed to '66.

**S:** Things were changing quickly.

**B:** Yes, they would there, too, eventually.

**S:** Your having the experience of being in the rural, more isolated working-class areas certainly gives you a different sense of the '60s. Berkeley was not everywhere. How much longer did you stay in West Virginia?

**B:** I taught at Glenville State College from the fall of '67 till the spring of '69, and then I went back to a university. I wanted more political science. I did not want to be a historian; politics were more exciting. I had been teaching political science, so I went to the closest, cheapest university, West Virginia University in Morgantown. I got a master's degree there in '69. That was fine. I liked the classes a lot; I liked my professors. By then, I think I was a "real" student, certainly more so than I had ever been before. And, again, one couldn't escape politics. Morgantown at that point had a core of political activists, mainly from New Jersey [*both laughing*], who formed student political parties, and we had moratoriums. After Kent State, a group of students burned down the ROTC building and were teargassed by state police. Again,

it's hard for students now to imagine the all-encompassing political atmosphere of that era. It was difficult to escape facing the war in Vietnam or escape politics in the late '60s, early '70s. I actually remember when there was a student moratorium, I went to class because I had Russian History that day with a German-Jewish professor whom I really respected, since he had been in a World War II concentration camp. There were two of us and we just talked with him about the war and he said, "What's right here? How do we figure this out?" He engaged us, he wasn't polemical or anything, just trying to figure this all out. "What do you think about things?" That was probably the best moratorium I ever had! *[Laughing]* I spent the time with a very bright person thinking about what all that meant. I have a lot of admiration for that guy.

**S:** And Kent State practically next door.

**B:** Yes. It was a hike over the mountains, but it really wasn't that far away. I don't think it mattered where you were at the time of Kent State. If you were on a college campus, it could happen anywhere.

**S:** I remember a Social Change class I taught here, where students did research on what the '60s were like here and uncovered a lot of interesting little things, not the least of which was that the college actually closed down in the late spring of 1970 over the war. There was so much going on they just decided to end the semester. A few years before that, students protested to end the dress code on campus.

**B:** My best, my only childhood friend had just come back from Vietnam and wanted to go to school and be in a nice, safe, insulated environment, so he enrolled at Kent State! The semester he enrolled was the semester of the shooting. In fact, I think he was in the library. So when he heard the weapons, he instinctively hit the floor and had a flashback. Certainly, Kent State would have been one of the most removed and isolated schools you could find.

**S:** You said you really got interested in political science. Was there a particular area of it that you were moving toward?

**B:** I liked it all. Looking back on it now, I don't really think I knew what I was doing. I began studying American government, primarily Congress (maybe because I wanted to be a legislator), but almost every time I focused on American government, I tended to look at foreign policy. My thesis was on Senatorial initiative and foreign policy. I took a lot of courses on U.S. foreign policy, and then I would sneak in these courses on Russian history, or Spanish colonial history, or comparative politics, British government. So I think I had convinced myself that I should focus on the United States, because, after all, that was where my strength was, because I am an American. But what was happening was clearly a growing interest in the outside world.

**S:** Was your master's thesis a behavioral science thesis or more historical?

**B:** Well, it was more historical, and I did a little behavioral research. I flirted quite a bit for five or six years with statistics and behavioralism. North Carolina was on the cutting edge of using computer technology and analyzing human behavior, so I thought I had to pay attention to that.

**S:** And what happened after your master's degree?

**B:** I seem to be always looking for peripheral places in the United States. I took a job at a branch of the University of Wisconsin, a two-year campus in northern Wisconsin. Once again, I seemed to be trying to re-create the small-town experience, this time in a town of about 3000 in cheese country.

**S:** So you left Punxsutawney, but your heart was still there.

**B:** Yes, that's right. I tend to live in the poorest county of any state I reside in. But it was a very pleasant experience. I spent three years there.

**S:** And this was a period of time when you had a couple of master's degrees and were able to get a tenure-track job at a college.

**B:** At that point, I had experience teaching a variety of courses. This campus was very much a community school.

**S:** And what was the teaching experience like there?

**B:** I had a lot of first-generation college students, returning Vietnam vets (the best students in the world), quite a few Menominee Indians, and I got heavily involved in politics and the antiwar movement. During the 1972 election, I was county chairman of the local Democratic Party. One of the advantages of living in small places. It was a wonderful experience. I saw my students becoming active. And if you needed a shot of radicalism to keep you going for a year, you just spent a week down at Madison—as you know from your own grad school experience there—and people handed you all the flyers you'd ever want, with a few extras to take back home.

**S:** Was being county chairman of the Democratic Party your first direct involvement in politics?

**B:** Yes, that's correct. A lesson I'd learned as a child was to stay away from politics because of the disharmony and disunity that it can cause, and the risks that come from publicly exposing your beliefs. But in this context, public speaking felt natural. I remember, we always met at a bar, a different bar in various parts of the county. I remember standing on a pool table, giving my greatest anti-Nixon speech ever. [Laughing] It was fun! I ran the McGovern campaign in that county in 1972. His closest competitor was George Wallace, but we won. The students went to every door in the county.

**S:** Sounds like it was a good feeling.

**B:** Yes; as you know, the activities around political campaigns tend to be more social than political, so it was exciting.

**S:** You mentioned the dangers of exposing your beliefs. Since now you are obviously challenging that, is this a really key turning point, saying, "I can do this. I can be successful at it"?

**B:** Probably so, but I don't think it turned me around 180 degrees. Still, I think I felt better about speaking out, saying publicly what I believe. But I am also cautious about doing that. I try to control that as much as possible, so I don't think I do it so often. Campaigns are something you try to plan and organize, so there is not a great deal of spontaneity. But it's quite fun. I do enjoy talking with people about those things, although it was often difficult working for McGovern in a very conservative Roman Catholic area with issues such as gun control and abortion, which were single issues for some people. I was asked before I left to run for the state legislature. I don't think I would have won, but I would have come close.

**S:** You say that was an ambition of yours?

**B:** Yes, it was. I've been asked three times, but I've rejected them all.

**S:** All in Wisconsin?

**B:** No, a couple of times in Vermont. I would have lost all of those elections. I've had student interns and met quite a few students who have worked in state legislatures, and one of the things that many of them say when they come back after the first couple of weeks is, "I could be a legislator." [Laughing] "I know what those guys are like, right?" You realize it's the part-time nature of the legislature. I can empathize with those statements. In 1973, I decided to go to graduate school again.

**S:** Where did you enroll this time?

**B:** I went to Lehigh University in eastern Pennsylvania.

**S:** And this was a doctoral program?

**B:** Yes, that's correct. It was an unusual program, funded by Carnegie Mellon. The idea was to have a rigorous doctoral program but one that focused on preparing college teachers as opposed to pure researchers. But it was taught like a regular Ph.D. program, because all the

instructors had been in Ph.D. programs, although they stuck in a few courses here and there, a few experiences that they hoped would make you a better teacher. And they paid attention to teaching. They had us be TAs most of the time, as well as take courses in psychology.

**S:** Did you get into that program because you were still very much interested in being a teacher?

**B:** At that point, I thought I would teach in community colleges, because it seemed in the late '60s, early '70s that the most exciting teaching was happening at community colleges, places like Miami Dade. The community colleges were doing very innovative—almost radical by traditional standards—work with their students, a lot of experiential education, getting their students out into the field, a lot of creative uses of student-produced media. So I actually thought I would get this doctorate and get a job somewhere in a community college. But it didn't work out that way.

**S:** What was the subject of your research at Lehigh?

**B:** Well, much of it was on pedagogy. I looked at experiential education, and I did comparative studies of people doing internships or other kinds of experiential education in political science around the country. So I got a chance to delve into behaviorialism and statistical analysis again. In a way, it was an interesting dissertation to do. It was publishable, anyway. And it was good. It helped me understand what was going on around the academic community in the United States and I gained a sense of what political scientists were doing or not doing, which is more often the case.

**S:** So you were looking at what different schools were doing in terms of internships, and what the outcomes were?

**B:** Yes, I had control groups and examined whether experiential education makes much difference based on variables such as people's attitudes and knowledge base. And it was fun to do.

**S:** In terms of outcomes, were you looking at what students had done within a year of the internships?

**B:** Yes, more what they knew than what they were doing, what they thought and particularly their attitudes toward politics, their attitudes toward being a participant in the political process, what kinds of educational experiences they had. But there were so many variables it was hard to make definitive conclusions. It was somewhat inconclusive, since there are so many variables that predate a student's college experience. At that point, too, I was really interested in socialization. I had taken a short course in political socialization with a famous political scientist, Jack Dennis, up at Syracuse. I began experimenting with using a socialization autobiography in my courses at Lehigh. I still do that here occasionally, and I've published some research on that.

**S:** That research was done around '73, '74. You could do a 25-year follow-up.

**B** (*laughing*): That would be interesting. I do have quite a bit of information, and I still gather data. Students do a lot of self-assessments with some computer programs that I've used, but in the discipline itself, political socialization is not a hot item anymore. It just became too unmanageable for people who like to crunch numbers and look at policy.

**S:** But don't you use some of those ideas now with students at MCLA?

**B:** Yes, that's right. I try to have students clarify their political beliefs—and everybody has political beliefs. I want them to think about and articulate them, and then work back and identify where those beliefs came from and how they are generated, how valuable they are, how they are related to their families and the media. That works out fairly well. An earlier statement I made was that no one develops ideas independently; students like to say they march to different drummers and think for themselves and all of that. One of the purposes of education is to have students explore their connectedness to people and life experiences.

**S:** What are their reactions when they realize, “Aha! That’s why I’ve got this idea”?

**B:** Well, they often don’t realize it. To soothe me, satisfy me, they’ll talk about all the sources of the thoughts they might have, how their father was important or what TV shows they watched, but then they often conclude by saying, “Well, now that I am an independent person, I can just go ahead and develop whatever ideas I want.” But some students do understand the socialization process. Again, it’s a matter of development, when people begin to make connections and see that they actually are a product of society and will continue to be.

**S:** Yes, it’s interesting in getting students to understand that or to be able to conceptualize it. I wonder if that’s developmental—that by the late teens or early 20s, some are better able to do that. It’s a tricky kind of thing.

**B:** Students, teenagers in this case, spend much of their time at least pretending they’re developing autonomy from institutions, families, schools, churches, and so forth, even though most of that autonomy is sort of group based. They all wear the same uniforms, listen to the same music, all the time believing that they are independent people. So there has to be a step there where you get from the need to be autonomous and independent to accepting dependency and interconnectedness—and understanding both the value and the burden of your past.

**S:** And, in a paradoxical way, until you are able to see that, you might say you really can’t become autonomous.

**B:** That’s true, that’s true, absolutely.

**S:** So people have to be able to say, “Yeah, OK, I behave that way because of this,” although they may not want to say that or think that, but that’s the way it works. It’s powerful stuff.

**B:** And I think it really gets at the core of learning.

*Continued on page 51*

## Another Look at the Sea: *Winslow Homer and Stephen Crane*

BY TONY GENGARELLY

The array of paintings by Winslow Homer on display at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute is truly extraordinary. In fact, if one considers both watercolors and oils, as well as prints and drawings, the Institute's holdings represent virtually every phase of Homer's long and productive career. From this exceptional collection, I have been especially drawn to three of Homer's marine paintings—*Undertow* (1886); *Eastern Point, Prout's Neck* (1900); *West Point, Prout's Neck* (1900)—since they are linked in my mind with the classic short story by Stephen Crane "The Open Boat." Crane's compelling narrative, written in 1897, is a remarkable companion to these paintings and helps us see them in the context of a late-19th-century effort to come to terms with shifting perceptions of social reality and philosophical truth. Gone is the pastoral retreat of an earlier agrarian republic and the comfortable position people enjoyed in the landscapes of the Hudson River School. By 1880 the garden landscape had been markedly transformed by the machine, and an urban-industrial society was searching for new ways to approach a more complex and impersonal world. In response to these developments, Homer and Crane



Figure 1: Winslow Homer (American, 1836–1910)  
*Undertow*, 1886  
Oil on canvas  
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA



Figure 2: Winslow Homer  
*Eastern Point, Prout's Neck*, 1900  
Oil on canvas  
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA



Figure 3: Winslow Homer  
*West Point, Prout's Neck*, 1900  
Oil on canvas  
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA



Figure 4: Winslow Homer  
*A Light on the Sea*, 1897  
Oil on canvas  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

looked to the great metaphor of the sea to explore the uncertain social and philosophical situation of their day.

Considering Homer's 1886 masterpiece *Undertow* (fig. 1), we see four bodies intertwined during a rescue operation, human strength matched against the power of the sea. Homer did a number of other rescue pictures in the 1880s, and the Clark has an etching of one of the most noteworthy of these, *Life Line* (1884—the print room also contains the Homer watercolor *Perils of the Sea*, 1881). The artist at this juncture in his life was drawn to the struggle between human beings and the indomitable power of nature. In *Undertow* he shows people locked in an embrace of humanity while they battle the raging surf, the artist's interpretation of a contemporary romantic naturalism that found community in the midst of a Darwinian effort to survive. In "The Open Boat," Crane, in similar fashion, presents us with a situation where four men, adrift in a lifeboat, bond in a common effort to gain the shore, which remains for most of the story just out of reach. As they battle the "snarling" waves relentlessly assaulting their fragile craft, the author remarks, "It would be difficult to describe the subtle brotherhood of men that was here established on the seas" (Crane 231). Like the two nearly drowned women in *Undertow*, three of the men eventually survive their ordeal, escape the seemingly malevolent power of the ocean. But for Crane this is not the last word about the sea and humanity, nor is Homer satisfied to leave the pounding surf with his rescue pictures of the '80s.

Having moved to Prout's Neck, Maine, in 1883, Homer spent the next ten years studying the rocks and surf just beyond his studio porch. The great marine paintings of the 1890s attest to his powers of observation. The Clark has one of these, *Sunset Saco Bay*, 1896. But this picture, with its conventional fisherwomen, does not really show us Homer's contemplation of the larger battle raging between the sea and the land, nor does it penetrate to the artist's vision of an eternal natural world and humanity's place in it. The other marine paintings of the 1890s suggest elements of Homer's quest, but the sea remains an impenetrable mystery. Crane, in "The Open Boat," likewise is reaching for an understanding of limitless nature as he poses his protagonists on the sea's edge in the final lines of his narrative: "When it came

night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea's voice to the men on the shore, and they felt that they could then be interpreters" (256). Interpreters of what? Presumably the message out of the sea. But what is the content of that message?

I think this question is answered, at least in part, by looking carefully at *Eastern Point, Prout's Neck* (fig. 2) and *West Point, Prout's Neck* (fig. 3). Homer completed these paintings in the fall of 1900 and they detail the seacoast located near his studio in Maine. The product of years of meditating on the ocean in fair weather and stormy gales, these pictures seem to demonstrate Homer's understanding about the essence of nature and the place of humanity in an evolving universe. In an almost prescient manner, Crane's descriptive passages in "The Open Boat" both anticipate and amplify the interpretation of these two exceptional marine paintings.

At the beginning of the second section of his narrative, Crane, with a quick stroke, paints a detached picture of the rampant sea. Gone are his prior allusions to a hostile or coldly indifferent nature as the author contemplates the sheer power and beauty of the ocean: "It was probably glorious, this play of the free sea, wild with lights of emerald and white and amber" (228). This description certainly recalls *Eastern Point, Prout's Neck*, Homer's 1900 painting of a northeaster. "Wild with lights of emerald and white and amber," the wind-driven surf pounds the rocky headland just southeast of Homer's studio. The storm surges with a primal creative energy, and as the waves attack the shore, they also deposit evidence of the ocean's generative power, the kelp and seaweed nestled against the foreground rocks. In this picture Homer displays nature's creative force, which, irrespective of human presence, wears away the land and, in that erosion, shapes and molds—rejuvenates—the planet. This insight into Homer's work may very well be present in Crane's awe of "this play of the free sea," the unrelenting power of nature that can be, paradoxically, a creative as well as destructive force.

Crane initiates the fifth part of his story with another compelling image of nature:

As darkness settled finally, the shine of the light, lifting from

the sea in the south, changed to full gold. On the northern horizon a new light appeared, a small bluish gleam on the edge of the waters. These two lights were the furniture of the world. Otherwise there was nothing but waves. (243)

And, again, at the onset of part seven, he relates:

When the correspondent again opened his eyes, the sea and the sky were each of the gray hue of the dawning. Later, carmine and gold was painted upon the waters. The morning appeared finally, in its splendor, with a sky of pure blue, and the sunlight flamed on the tips of the waves. (250)

Between these two beautiful descriptions of the dusk and the dawn, Crane's four characters have endured their night at sea: "A night on the sea in an open boat is a long night" (243). Inside each of these portraits of nature, their experience is implied. The reader senses their unassuming presence within the "furniture of the world."

Homer's other Clark marine painting from the fall of 1900, *West Point, Prout's Neck*, provides a similar sense of the relationship of humanity to nature. In this extraordinary seascape, a magnificent sunset with its brilliant hues of crimson and violet hangs over Saco Bay, its light reverberating on the water and reflected in an imposing burst of spray curling up in the foreground. Homer claims to have done this picture "15 minutes after sunset—not one minute before—" in order to catch the "brilliant glow of color" lighting the edge of the clouds before "the sun has got beyond their immediate range" (Stebbins 338). Yet, when compared with an earlier rendition by the artist, this apparently pure seascape may very well contain a suggestion of humanity's place within a vast and changing cosmos.

In 1897 Homer painted *A Light on the Sea* (fig. 4) from virtually the same location as *West Point*, which looks out to Checkley Point over Saco Bay. In this version, Homer posed a woman on the rocks, her sinewy form set against a beautifully illuminated sea. In *A New World* (Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 1983), Carol Troyen has proposed that the woman's figure in *A Light on the Sea* has a marked similarity to the dramatic burst of ocean in *West Point, Prout's Neck*:

For the solid, statuesque figure of the woman, Homer here [in *West Point, Prout's Neck*] substitutes the shimmering, transparent cloud of spray, its sinuous contours echoing her curves, but appearing as ephemeral as she seems substantial. (Stebbins 339)

If this is, indeed, a plausible interpretation, Homer has used his marine sunset to convey a universal truth about the human condition. Just as Crane implies transient human experience in the context of beautiful natural scenery, so, too, Homer's human stand-in, with its "dissolving anthropomorphic shape, becomes a metaphor for mortality set against the spectacular rhythms of nature" (Stebbins 339). Our time on this planet, it would appear, is but a fraction of a second when measured against a universal background. Given these assumptions, the unadulterated representations of the natural world manifested by author and artist add up to a deeper truth about the natural world and the tenuous position of humanity within its eternal unfolding.

In Crane's straightforward natural descriptions and in Homer's pristine seascapes, nature is not cruel or indifferent, nor is it caring or beneficent—all human attributions. Nature simply is. It abides, creates, destroys. And from this recognition of nature's wildness comes a capacity to understand humankind's modest place within a paradoxical universe, a shifting, multifaceted reality that holds both life and death for conscious beings who aspire to eternity but must embrace mortality.

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## Three Poems

BY HILARY RUSSELL

### Putting In

Taking out is another thing, but putting  
in down a steep bank in dry weather when two  
of you have to lower the boat with bow  
and stern lines, your paddles and your life  
vests already aboard, reminds me of  
a burial where the deceased had prohibited  
machinery. Standing on long boards for fear of cave-in,  
we lowered her with 50 feet of heavy manila rope.

The setting up and the slow hand-over-hand  
lowering fascinated us, the circle of mourners,  
and we forgot her soul and our grief  
as we watched our friends crouch to feed the rope,  
which at last could have been tossed into the grave  
like boat line tossed as we climb down carefully  
and push off, wobbling into the current.

# Walking

Walking home from anywhere should be as a robin's chirup, chirup, chirup—part of summer, as free and slow as an ambling four-year-old eating ice cream. Deer amble. Opossums. The ancient trees have ambled away.

A mile into the mountain woods, the distance into Abbey Lake, you keep the aluminum canoe under a green, grommated tarp, good for camouflage more than weather. Pine needles have layered it, decayed to cotton canvas wood.

But aluminum is aluminum and a rivet, a rivet. And this Adirondack pond and this boat you carried here in the '60s still rivets you. You get here somehow every year, every day, when the truth comes home—wet-sneakered,

dirty, sheepish, tramped and paddled truth. "Acid dead" doesn't mean DEAD dead. It's like any odd medium, like mountain soil: laurels, scrub oaks, blueberries. But forget trout, unless you lime, if you want truth flown in.

You circle the pond, casting and casting, find fresh sticks on a beaver lodge, set a long, straight one in your boat, and glance behind at nothing but frighteningly clear water. You won't skunked be as you amble out, thanking the beaver.

## Build a Fence

Our next-door neighbor Martha commissioned  
her husband, an engineer, to build a split rail fence  
along our line.

I helped, using his blue, auger-style posthole digger  
to bore along the string he'd stretched from iron  
corner post to post.

When rock stopped me, I'd chunk-chunk-chunk  
with my red double-shovel-style digger  
and wrestle out the broken stone.

Then we'd measure depth, thunk down the posts,  
slide in the rails, fill, level, plumb fill and tamp.  
Nice work in mild weather.

Each spring our beautiful wives talk across:

Martha trims her giant French lilacs;

Jenny prunes her arching raspberries.

Warming up, Martha rips out bittersweet;

Jenny snaps blossoming rhubarb stalks.

Kneeling and sometimes sitting cross-legged,

they weed daylilies, iris, phlox; nurse lupine,

lavender, lemon balm, tarragon, potentilla.

Mowing around the beds for ten years, I graze

each bottom rail and bump each lichen-patched post,

the way kids bump their pals,

to see if everyone's still there.

# Herring Season

BY ROBIN O'SULLIVAN

**T**wo days had lapsed after the ides of March when I boarded a plane bound for Alaska to feel spring creep into the land of icebergs and polar bears.

Flying west across America, I watched the sky from a porthole window, turning back my wristwatch one hour at a time. Fear rose inside me like a mist from the earth.

I was trying to ignore the fact that I would be graduating from college soon. Paralyzed by complacency, I had no plans for my life after graduation. Streams of energy had frozen into a solid, icy block in my chest. I needed an Alaskan retreat to jolt me from the stagnation I felt myself slipping into during that prolonged winter.

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When I landed in Sitka, Alaska, it was nearly midnight, and my older sister, Sandra, greeted me at the airport, a one-terminal building guarded by a huge stuffed bear. Initially, I decided to visit Alaska more out of a longing to see my sister than because of an intrepid quest for thrills.

A year before, Sandra had moved away from our family's East Coast home to begin a year of community service with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. She was stationed in Sitka, a seaside town in the sheltered waters of the Inside Passage, southeast Alaska's archipelago. Sandra was the fearless one in the family.

Sitka lies on the western shore of Baranof Island. The wild country of Tongass National Forest, the largest temperate rain forest in the world, hems Sitka in on three sides; the Pacific Ocean borders on the fourth side. High precipitation makes the town's climate mild year-round. There are no icebergs or dogsleds in Sitka, but the mystique attached to America's northernmost state kept me on the lookout for igloos. I saw only slate roofs on skinny wooden houses as we drove in darkness.

I paused before opening my eyes the next morning, afraid that Alaska wouldn't live up to my expectations. I slipped out of my sleeping bag on the floor next to Sandra's bed and ran outside in bare feet. The sun kissed my forehead gently. I gaped at the steep mountains looming over me.

Accustomed to the rolling hills of Vermont, I was in awe of the landscape's magnitude. Some of the mountains were rounded, dense with trees, and some were snowcapped, angular and rocky. The rugged coastline faced island-studded waters. I was convinced that I had landed in paradise.

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Sandra and I packed salmon sandwiches for an afternoon bike ride. We rode seven miles east of town on Sawmill Creek Road. Across from an abandoned pulp mill, a gravel road maintained by the U.S. Forest Service forked left, and we ditched our bikes at the trailhead. We hiked up two miles to reach Blue Lake, a mountain reservoir that provides Sitka with fresh drinking water.

To find the place where anything begins is to understand the raw purity of origins. I filled my water bottle in the icy lake and savored the unadulterated taste of Alaskan water. We picked out pieces of smooth driftwood from the edge of Blue Lake to take home as souvenirs, reminders of a clean, unfiltered source of energy.

That evening, we ate dinner at a restaurant overlooking the harbor. Herring season was just beginning, and we watched the herring

boats glide back to the docks at sunset. During herring season, which lasts only a week, sometimes less, humpback whales move close to the rocky shoreline, feeding on the dense herring schools that come to Sitka Sound to spawn. Whales, sea lions and eagles must compete with boatloads of fishermen, who strip the egg sacs from the herring and sell them, making a fortune. The Japanese treasure raw herring roe as a New Year's delicacy and pay high prices for the eggs. I ordered herring fillets for dinner to taste what the whales eat.

The largest marine mammal found in southeast Alaska, humpback whales can measure up to 50 feet long and weigh up to 35 tons. When female humpbacks give birth every two or three years, their babies are born 16 feet long and can weigh two tons. Everything in Alaska seemed larger than life.

Outside the restaurant, Main Street was lined with gift shops, craft stores and hotels, which flourish when summer cruise ships along the Alaskan coast bring 250,000 tourists to Sitka each year. The shopkeepers asked where I was visiting from and told stories about Sitka's history.

The Tlingit Indians were the original inhabitants of Sitka. Alexander Baranof, governor of a Russian fur trading company, established Sitka as the Russian capital of Alaska in 1804, forcing the native people away from their settlement. In 1867, having lost interest in Sitka and its sea-otter pelts, Russia sold the entire region of Alaska to the United States for 7.2 million dollars. The Tlingits returned slowly and have since established a tribal government for Baranof Island natives. Sitka is now a unique blend of Tlingit culture and Russian history.

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Sandra took me to Aurora's Watch, the halfway house where she served as a recreation advisor for recovering alcoholic men. The building was seedy, decrepit, half-painted, and I wondered how the men were able to fight for their dignity or rebuild their lives in the face of such desolation.

It was movie night, so Sandra drove a van full of tough-looking young and middle-aged men, mostly Native Americans, to the dollar theater. Sandra's a fireball. The men couldn't help but adore her. They teased her about her driving skills, and she laughed along with them, genuine and confident, as they clamored for sodas and popcorn.

Alcoholism is rampant in Sitka, mainly because poverty, unemployment and boredom are ubiquitous. Natives succumb to the disease in high numbers, and the only explanation I have for this is that perhaps the Tlingit Indians are still inwardly resisting the invasion of the whites, and alcohol is their last weapon of defiance against reality.

Commercial fishermen and immigrants from the lower 48 states who are attracted by the island's beauty live peacefully with the Tlingit people in Sitka, each group learning to thrive on a transformed island. Sitka's population has grown to 9,000, though the town itself has not expanded physically beyond the confines of the aboriginal settlement.

Natives have assimilated into mainstream Sitka, but there remains a sense of cosmic loss within the Tlingit community. The towering totem poles in a forest on the outskirts of town stand as a haunting testament to the nearly extinguished culture of the Tlingit people, the heartbeat of Sitka's history, now confined to a historical park and displayed in local museums. Part of Sandra's job was to help the Native Alaskans find a sense of purpose and identity in modern-day Sitka, without relying on alcohol.

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We set out with our backpacks after breakfast on our second morning. A ten-minute walk from downtown Sitka put us at the trailhead for Gavan Hill. Entering the ancient rain forest, we walked slowly, looking for signs that would foretell the impending arrival of spring. The trail ascended three miles through muskeg, spruce and hemlock.

The stately Sitka spruce can grow up to 200 feet tall. The branches have an upward sweep suggestive of rejoicing. Exceptionally light and strong, the wood from Sitka spruce is often used to make ladders, portable bleachers and crew racing shells, because it is capable of bearing human weight in great proportion to its own weight. The bark on the oldest spruce trees is deep purple or reddish brown, and I broke off a chip to carry with me, hoping the strength of the tree would be contagious.

Baranof Island is home to only one species of brown bear, the grizzly, and the bear population is dense, with one animal per square mile. Grizzly bears are solitary and furtive, seldom seeking contact with humans, but Sandra warned us to make noise, to keep the bears, which may have been coming out of hibernation with growling stomachs, at bay.

I've always felt an affinity with bears. In fits of antisocial tendencies, I have often been tempted to hibernate as well, to seek refuge from the elements in a protected cave of my mind. It's easier to duck the punches of a season than to stand in the open air, exposed to the elements, at the risk of showing weakness. Hibernation, like stoicism, is a defense mechanism. Still, I was afraid of being lulled by the comfort of a den, and I blessed my distasteful reaction to the recent numbing winter as a sign that there was still life in me.

In the 50-degree weather, we were dressed in shorts and light shirts, so, at the summit of Gavan Hill, we were surprised to find that almost a foot of snow still covered the mountain, stubbornly refusing to melt.

The crunch of snow beneath my feet when I was searching for the origin of spring gave me shivers. I was afraid of regression. Even so, I told myself, it's possible that snow is meant to preserve the energy of life for a fragment of time so the land can give birth to beauty again. Before we bloom, we must stagnate for a season. The redeeming value of relapse is that it can give us the opportunity to start over.

From the crest of Gavan Hill, we could see the Inside Passage as early Tlingit Indians and Russian explorers must have seen it. Sitka was built on a seaside sliver of Baranof Island, because the expanse of surrounding land, even today, is unsuitable for habitation. I wasn't used to that much wilderness at once, to the sight of a glossy ocean speckled with pristine islands or to the proximity of impenetrable forests.

I resisted when we turned to hike back down the mountain, clinging to the apex of our afternoon, but, sadly, one cannot stay on the summit forever. Reluctantly, I followed my older sister's footsteps, as I had attempted to do so many times in my youth, returning to level ground. I was comforted by the knowledge that down below, though one can no longer savor the view, one can at least still remember it, carrying the knowledge of indefinite possibilities. Ultimately, we all leave home so we can return someday with the tools to mend what is rotting in our former lives.

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On my fourth day in Sitka, we prepared for an overnight sea-kayaking trip. We drove seven miles west on Halibut Point Road until we reached Starrigavan Campground, the end of town, where we

wrapped our gear in plastic, stuffed it beneath the shells and launched our kayaks. Sandra's friend, Rick, was serving as our guide for the trip. Rick took his own kayak while Sandra and I shared another, falling into a rhythm of splashing water and burning muscles. Nearby islands seemed suddenly remote when measured by our ineffective strokes.

Across Sitka Sound, visible from almost any point in town, lies Mount Edgecumbe, an extinct volcano. The original blast of Mount Edgecumbe shook Baranof Island when glaciers from the Ice Age were retreating. The eruption covered the coastline of Sitka with 20 feet of ash. It was during the following centuries that the Tlingit Indians moved into the area, settling on the land abandoned by receding glaciers.

We were planning to camp out at the base of Mount Edgecumbe, so we headed west across the bay. Sitka's waters are home to sea otters, sea lions, porpoises, harbor seals and, of course, humpback whales. Seabirds like the tufted puffin and rhinoceros auklet feed on salmon, herring and halibut in Sitka Sound. The water was calm and mysterious as we rowed, but I wondered what lurked beneath our lonely kayaks. Security, like the calm sea, is an illusion.

A loud tooting of air, the sound of a wet horn, interrupted us, and suddenly, a hundred yards in front of our kayaks, a humpback whale spouted a perfect stream of air and water. A flip of the tail, a gentle splash and it was gone beneath the surface again. We stopped paddling and waited anxiously. A few minutes later, three whales spouted at once, 200 yards to the east. We turned our kayaks and followed these three, watching them dive together playfully in the open ocean. We tracked the whales farther into unprotected waterways, where the waves became choppy and the wind spun on my forehead. The thrill of sea kayaking intoxicated me, and I found myself addicted to the glimpse of a splashing gray tail.

I wondered how often we are unaware of what swims beneath us in the quiet sea; what powerful beings share our world, waiting to emerge; what strong potential lies unseen within us until we tune in to the quiet rhythm of our hearts. Sometimes change, like spring, just needs an invitation.

We found ourselves too far from Mount Edgecumbe to camp there that night, so Rick suggested we alter our course and head for the Siganaka Islands. Weaving in and out of the rocky shorelines, we saw a school of spawning herring, which seemed tiny and hardly capable of satisfying the huge hungry mouths of the humpbacks.

Passing through a narrow inlet in late afternoon, I spotted a bald eagle, deliberately swooping down for prey from the spruce trees above. To confront a wild animal in its own territory is to be humbled by the simplicity in which most species live. Humans alone have withdrawn from the cycle of subsistence on which other animals rely. In a way, we are no longer related to primitive man, who, like the eagle, killed only what he could eat and share with his family.

We noticed something bobbing in the sunny water ahead, and, paddling closer, we realized that it was a cluster of sea lions. Wary of our kayaks, they began barking and growling at us, poking their heads high above water to threaten us or rolling and diving beneath the water. One sea lion flipped over and stuck its fin above the surface, trying to scare us with an imitation of a shark. We waited for the group to move off, then pulled our kayaks high upshore on an unnamed island of the Siganakas. Another group of comical sea lions entertained us as we unloaded our gear.

Rick pitched our tents on a mossy cliff, and as the sun plunged into the Pacific, we gathered dry wood for a fire. We made chairs from semiflat rocks on the shore and huddled around the flames as the evening chill set in. We cooked dinner, roasted marshmallows over the fire until it died out, then scrambled to our tents. The frigid air kept me awake, and throughout the night I heard the sea lions splashing in the water below.

I rose with the sun, restless, and tried to explore the dense rain forest, but the tangled branches were too thick to penetrate. Growing sleepy again, I stretched out on a log near the kayaks, absorbing the peace of that idyllic land.

I lost track of time. As I drifted in and out of consciousness, I heard twigs crackling in the forest and, though I couldn't discern a dark shape or a pair of eyes, something told me a grizzly bear was nearby. I felt

the icy blocks in my chest begin to shift and vibrate. Silently, I invited the bear to show his face. He never emerged. Hours slipped by, and I realized, gradually, that the vapors of fear inside me had dissolved into the Alaskan sky.

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It was the first day of spring. During the vernal equinox, the earth is straight on its axis, and the world is as it should be: 12 hours of darkness, 12 hours of daylight, everything in balance. Although the shift in seasons is gradual, the change in my mentality was abrupt. In the springtime, I could let my guard down, with the spirit of resurrection and the promise of a savior. Resilience, ultimately, is what makes us human.

Perhaps it was just a black-tailed deer hiding beneath the shady trees on that island. But I wasn't afraid of grizzly bears, and I realized that I shouldn't be paralyzed with anxiety about leaving college. Like the Tlingits, I would learn to adjust; like my sister, I would build a new life.

Suddenly, I didn't know how to quell the stirring inside me. Maybe I just needed to see the seasons change in new countryside, to assure myself that wherever I went after graduation, enticing opportunities would beckon.

By the time I boarded the plane again to fly back East, I had admitted to myself that I needed to start planning for my future. The first step was embracing the unknown, believing in the glimmer of a life that I was just beginning to fathom. The wilderness in my soul was much deeper than all the uncharted land in Alaska. I had so much to learn about fear—and about being brave.

Sitka restored my faith in ideals. It is during those times when one feels free, in the backcountry and beyond, that the pull of adventure is strongest, calling us to drift beyond the placid bay toward the distant splash of a humpback whale on the horizon.

*Continued from page 32*

**S:** Now, when did you start at North Adams State?

**B:** I was a bicentennial appointment, 1976.

**S:** OK, 1976. Why would you remember that? And you came from Lehigh directly here?

**B:** No, I had one intervening job. I spent a year at a private school in suburban Chicago.

**S:** At a college?

**B:** Yes. It was a great experience. Somewhat like the school we are trying to become, sort of a liberal arts/performing arts kind of school. I got to go to the opera and experience all kinds of cultural activities, ones no one even knew existed back home in Punxsutawney.

**S:** And this was just outside Chicago?

**B:** Just west of Chicago.

**S:** What brought you here?

**B:** Well, I had never been in New England, and the job I had in Chicago was only a one-year appointment. By that time, jobs had become more difficult to find, and so I had to find someplace to work. I took the train to New England and was met by then department chair John McNulty, who has since died. What a magnificent impression North Adams makes, especially if the sun's shining [*laughing*]. It looked like a great place to live! I went on the assumption that most students were the same and that most courses were similar, and there's some truth to that, and so we moved here.

**S:** When I met you, in the fall of '78, I remember you were just coming back from Africa, and were interested in Africa. How did that develop?

**B:** Back at West Virginia, I had taken a couple of exciting courses in African studies. I think I had a latent interest in Africa. And, as I said before, I had an interest in foreign policy and government, as well as my eternal search for various edges, geographic edges of the world, intellectual edges, although an edge for me may not be quite as distinct as it is for other people. Then, in 1978, I found that an organization was looking for group leaders for work projects, an organization called Crossroads Africa, a model for the Peace Corps. So I went to suburban New York and had a wonderful weekend interview at a Girl Scout camp in Westchester County. I was accepted into the program and took a group, primarily students, to Sudan. It was a very powerful experience, going from the richest country to basically the poorest. It's just a simplified life, stripped of the superficial, down to the basics, and seeing people who have nothing being just wonderful, wonderful people. That stayed with me more than any other travel experience.

**S:** And then you did some teaching on Africa here?

**B:** Yes, I did some teaching. I had a little bit of formal training and did a lot of reading. The person I replaced here in political science had taught a course on Africa, so it was "on the books." There was no Africanist here at the time, so I offered an introductory course in African Politics, which I have since broadened to make it more of an interdisciplinary cross-cultural course.

**S:** I know that you are very interested in Canada and have taught many courses on Canada. How did that get started?

**B:** Looking at it developmentally, my father took me fishing in northern Ontario when I was 13 and I was really intrigued by a bilingual soup-can label [*laughing*], as well as the obvious cultural diversity.

**S:** It wasn't that three-volume history of Canada that did it, huh?

**B:** No. You come here to New England, you go to Montreal and realize how close this foreign country is. Then one day in the mail I received

a brochure from the Canadian embassy in the United States, looking to fund American scholars who might want to develop courses about Canada. So I applied, got a ton of money and went to all kinds of workshops and institutes, traveled, interviewing Canadians, and eventually created a course on Canadian politics.

**S:** When was that?

**B:** I believe '85 or '86.

**S:** So you've been going full scale on that for 14 years now?

**B:** Yes, and it just continues to grow. It's been great. Another country that's so near you can take students to visit. Its history looks vaguely familiar, because it is so intertwined with the United States, but when you turn the corner, it's quite different.

**S:** How do students react to Canada?

**B:** I suppose the way most Americans do. It's a big, cold place, with beer and hockey, which doesn't have a great deal of relevance to their lives. But in our Canadian courses, almost every student has said, "Wow, Canada's really something." They really like it. I think they also buy the argument that with the 1988 Free Trade Agreement and the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement, Canada's going to be part of their existence financially in one way or another.

**S:** How do they take to the Canadian political parties and the parliamentary system?

**B:** That confuses them. Parliaments in general confuse Americans. I think they are always a bit shocked by the diversity in Canadian parties, a right-wing party and a left-wing party as opposed to the more homogeneous centrist parties of the United States. In general, I believe what they react to in Canada is the collective idealism as opposed to the individualism that exists in the U.S., and that reaction plays out

when they look at parliament—"What do you mean, legislators can't vote the way they want to vote on legislation? What's this socialist party about? Why are all the political parties in Canada receptive to a national health-care system?" They seem upset with the lack of choice in the U.S, but I think that is a common American reaction to Canadian institutions in general.

**S:** It sounds like your students get to see those values not just as something that is grafted on but that percolates throughout Canadian institutions and society.

**B:** We talk to Canadians via the Internet or in person. Last semester, we went to Ottawa and talked to representatives of political parties, and this summer we had a Comparative North American Cultures course and one of the instructors was a Canadian. He said one of the reasons he liked being a Canadian is that he has the opportunity to be a socialist [*laughing*]. Students really picked up on that comment (they had to keep notes on portfolios) and they all said, "Well, it's amazing, Richard is really happy to be in Canada because he can call himself a socialist." Again, that was just one comment out of thousands of words, but it's the theme that generally ran through all of them.

**S:** It sounds like you do a lot of work with students in the field, meeting people, going to Canada. . . .

**B:** Yes! I finally found a way to build in all the things I like about education, developmental things, exposing people to new cultures, experiential, travel, and I have this country right next door. We can go four and a half hours and drop the students off someplace where basically only French is spoken. Or we can go another three hours and be in bilingual Canada, or see aboriginal groups. It works out quite well and Canadians will challenge Americans. One of my Internet courses was linked with Canada and the Canadian students were pretty anti-American. Students were shocked. Most of my students never have to deal with that on a personal level. The Canadians were biased and extremely critical.

**S:** What was their critique about Americans?

**B:** Health care! American militarism, individualism, all the "isms." Arrogance in general.

**S:** Did our students get defensive?

**B:** No, I'm real pleased, they did not get defensive. They were puzzled, and they also wanted to be nice to Canadians and people in other countries. My students are really pretty nice people. In general, they want to be liked, they want to treat other people well.

**S:** In critiquing our health-care policies, would our students begin to question why we don't have a health-care *system*, that sort of thing?

**B:** I think there's more of a fatalism, a feeling that this is the way it has to be, there's not much that can be done. Fatalism is sometimes over-riding and controls the terms of how people view those issues on a personal level. So a student might say, "Canada has national health care where you just walk in and pay two dollars or pay nothing. Yeah, that's really nice. I understand it, but what relevance does that have to the United States, where nothing like that would ever happen?" The ideological boundaries that exist in society are pretty confining. One of the reasons I like to play around with political ideas is based on the concept that beliefs build boundaries like ships in a bottle, and our policies are in a bottle. You begin your education working in your own bottle, and someday hopefully realize what a small bottle you are in and how your belief system restricts you.

**S:** Yes. And Canada would be such a good place to do it, because in so many ways it is similar to the U.S., basically English speaking, shares North America. But couldn't a student say, "Wait a minute, they have this health-care system. We don't. Why can't we?" Wouldn't some push it a little bit more? Do you think it's more the power of American ideology than student fatalism?

**B:** Yes, fatalism may be the wrong word, but fatalism may be the end product.

**S:** Do you see a difference between the students you taught in the '80s and '90s and the students you worked with in the '60s and '70s, as to what can be done and what can't be done?

**B:** Yes, sure, there is a generational aspect, certainly. I think Americans at this point have disassociated the economy so much from politics—a fairly consistent theme throughout U.S. history, but it seems to be more so now than it was in the '60s, so to look for political solutions in the '90s seems more unnatural than it did back then. Vietnam had a lot of economic implications for individuals. What should I be doing with my life? Should I be working or going to school? So, yes, in that way, the societal context is different now. I think historical context matters a lot, and so students were more political in the '60s, but everybody was more political—you almost had to be in that era. Now there aren't many options. If you look around campus, not just our campus but any campus, where are the active groups? Even main-line groups, Young Republicans, Young Democrats, don't exist. Political parties operate on an elite level in the United States, media based, money driven, as opposed to grass-roots parties. I don't think there's anything wrong with students today, they just got stuck with a tough context, a tough era as far as politics go.

**S:** Another question on Canada. I know you've been developing and continue to develop on the Internet some kind of connection with Canadian students. Can you say how that got started and how it's going?

**B:** Once we got wired on campus, the department had a strong pedagogical goal that students be linked with other countries. I just started submitting random inquiries over the Internet—anybody out there interested in working on some kind of vague project that might link Canadian and U.S. students? So this person at the University of Brunswick said yes, and we talked a long time, wrote quite a bit and worked out an experimental project. He had a course in Canadian

Identity, and I assembled some students interested in Quebec issues, and they started exchanging information. That group, while it was in progress, drew in other people, including some of their parents, and we had some enlightening discussions. I actually met this guy after we had completed the courses. I drove to the University of Brunswick to see him, and we are now very close friends. He's the person who co-taught the North American Cultures course. We've delivered papers at conferences together. He is now back home in Montreal as a doctoral student and teaches courses at various universities. Then I received some money from the government of Canada a couple of years ago that led to my team-teaching a course with a professor in British Columbia. So we linked that way. He and I are doing a video conference course this fall. It takes a lot of work. Just using the Internet per se doesn't mean a great deal unless there is some purpose to it. And it requires a bit of structure, quite a bit of structure. But it's quite good. (Problems occur, just like with normal courses, such as assignments turned in late, but they are magnified tenfold when you are linking students with others via the Internet.) I have had students in my courses who have been linked with students in other countries who have become friends with those people and actually have gone to visit them in faraway places like Saskatchewan.

**S:** You mentioned receiving a grant from the Canadian government. What kind of support are you getting from our college and the U.S. government in terms of Canadian relations?

**B:** Technically, I get wonderful support here from the Computer Science people. They have helped me construct a bulletin board and Web pages. I couldn't begin to do that without their help. In general, the college administration has been supportive as well. The Canadian government has given me a couple of grants that have allowed me to travel to British Columbia twice and to Canadian political science conferences. While the Internet is good, you really need to talk face-to-face with these people eventually. And that's what I'd like to do with students, too, make electronic contact and then actually go there or have them come here, or both—meet these people in real life.

**S:** Does the U.S. government or U.S. foundations spend much money funding these kinds of things? Is it a two-way street, to support academic work and enable American students to get to know Canadians?

**B:** No, not that I know of. No. Canada is also a bit special and gets taken for granted, often viewed as an extension of the United States.

**S:** Which kind of supports these Canadian students' being upset about our arrogance.

**B:** There's only one government in the world that spends more money [than Canada] promoting understanding of its culture, and that's Germany. The United States doesn't worry about promoting understanding, or culture. They just do a few things through embassies and the *Voice of America*.

**S:** Your Canadian work is fascinating. You get to understand your own country more just by doing these things.

**B:** Absolutely, and part of this process is understanding yourself as well as understanding your country. Of course, not all of us do that. Seldom do we ask, Who are we, what are we doing?

**S:** You also teach a Vietnam course.

**B:** I've taught that course twice, simply because students have asked for it. The course focuses primarily on the United States during the Vietnam war, so that while we do a little bit of history about Vietnam, primarily it focuses on the U.S., why we were there, and the effects of that war on the U.S. I don't do as much justice to the whole Vietnam-U.S. experience as I would like, but that course has proven to be extremely popular in large part because the parents of our current students are of that Vietnam generation. Last semester was the second time I'd taught it and I think people learned things, but it was also a powerful emotional experience, something I rarely have in

courses. Students brought in videotapes of interviews they had done of their parents, even their grandparents. I had a couple of Vietnam vets in, one who had never spoken publicly about his experience in the war, and that turned out to be more emotional than we ever thought it would be. For students, it was like a catharsis. Even if students' parents weren't involved directly in the Vietnam war, some of them protested, went to Woodstock. All of them were aware in one way or another. Students said it was one of the best courses they had. I don't think it's a great course in terms of what people learn, but achieving a congruence of feeling and knowledge made it an extremely important semester for most of them.

**S:** And is it your intention to teach that course every once in a while?

**B:** Yes, I guess every couple of years I'll probably do it. In two years we can do a course on the Gulf War. It's good for me, too. I don't consciously try to make the course personal. I talk very little about my military experience, but it is, personally, in a very secretive way, sort of fun for me to look at that stuff and view some of the old film clips. I guess we are more reflective now. There's more reflective writing by Vietnam soldiers. We have a lot more soldiers from the Vietnam era writing poetry, reflective pieces, more psychological studies.

**S:** Have you ever tried to count up the number of different courses you have taught?

**B:** I did once. It's in the 20s. I even taught a course on the Middle East one semester. It's one of the wonderful things about college teaching, you can experiment with courses. Sometimes you need to experiment, because we don't have all the faculty we need to offer everything. As long as you do that in a fairly student/faculty cooperative kind of way, a nonpretentious kind of way, I don't think it is too academically illegitimate.

**S:** So that's the upside of being the only political scientist on campus?

**B:** Correct! And political scientists, by and large, aren't a very exciting bunch of people, anyway [*laughing*], so it's just as well. That's the great thing about going to Canadian studies conferences. They're more eclectic, lots of people teach literature and art, and they have more fun with ideas than Americans.

**S:** As opposed to American political scientists?

**B:** Yes. I have stopped telling people I am one. They are extremely competitive and they've also forgotten what politics are about. The discipline is not about power anymore; it's more into management and policy analysis now. It's unfortunate what has happened to political science in the United States. Political scientists have always struggled to fit in, to be associated with prelaw, for example. I think also that political science is like one of those glass bottles, too self-enclosed, too discipline bound.

**S:** What would you say has been the best course you've ever taught? You could have a tie!

**B** (*laughing*): Well, one doesn't stand out. The Vietnam course, as we discussed, was rewarding for me in the sense of how much students were in touch with things that happened in class. Canadian courses that involved travel were extremely rewarding for me. So I suppose those are my best courses. I never think so much in terms of best courses. I've rarely been disappointed in any of them, although I am never quite certain how much one accomplishes in teaching or the impact on students. But it is rewarding for me.

**S:** In terms of teaching and the age difference between you and your students, I know you've got a daughter who's beyond college now, and a son who's approaching that age. Was that helpful in terms of relating to your kids and understanding what they're going through, and also what our students are going through?

**B:** Does being a teacher help in being a parent?

**S:** Yes, that, and does being a parent help in being a teacher? I hadn't thought about it both ways.

**B:** Well, I think being a teacher at a university does help in being a parent. My daughter, who is now 30, told me a few years ago that she worried about me, that I might not be seeking enough challenges in life, that I might be stagnating. While she provided no evidence, she made me think about my career. And I did go to Africa again. I think that's one of the advantages of being at a university or college. Being around students is invigorating and sort of forces you to deal with the world. I suppose you could hide. College teaching helps me with my son. I can be a bit more cool than I might be normally, which is really important to him during these adolescent years, to have parents with some kind of coolness. I've brought all of my children to classes off and on, mainly because they had no place else to be. I think it's been quite good for them. And I've always taken my kids, when I could, on field trips, and I think it's been good for both the students and my children.

**S:** I don't know how you plan for the future and such, but do you have any particular goals that you might want to accomplish, say in the next five years?

**B:** No, what I want of myself and what I want of my students are ways to grow and develop challenges, wherever that may take us. And I want to teach the same courses and some different courses in new and exciting kinds of ways as much as I can. I want to check out the new technologies, although I do basically have a sort of Luddite streak in me about technology.

**S:** Looking back on your career, if you had to do anything differently, what comes to mind? Sounds like you've really enjoyed your career.

**B:** Yes, I think I would have smelled the roses and paid a little more attention to things that were happening and made some connections between my studies and my life. I sometimes chastise students for not taking advantage of all the opportunities that they now have in their

lives. It would have been nice if I had done that when I was younger.

**S:** You've talked a lot about the way in which you teach and the areas that you are interested in, including research. One of the important things about being a state college teacher is service to the community, and connections with the community. I know you are involved in that. I wonder if you can tell us about what you have done and give us a sense of how that service operates.

**B:** One regret I have is that I haven't been as active in the community as I think I should have been. I've done interviews, commentary on elections, but that never seemed like service so much, it was just fun to do. [*Laughs*] You get to talk about politics and walk away!

**S** (*laughing*): And you still have your job!

**B:** That's right, there was no tenure process, no committee on promotions making decisions on the quality of your comments! But what I wish I'd done more of was work one on one with children, serving more as a "big brother." I've done some basketball coaching, girls' basketball coaching. I've served on the school board in my hometown, and when I lived in North Adams, I served on an advisory panel for federal funding. I'm currently chair of the local Democratic Party. I'm involved and actually got to vote for the Vermont electors in the last Presidential election. Twelve people and myself chose the electors.

**S:** Was your name actually on the ballot?

**B:** No, no, I only voted for others. I've often wondered how that was done and just wanted to see the process. I look at other people who do a much better job than I do at community service and I think, in a way, reflecting on the five-year plans you mentioned before, that is one of the things I need to work on. I've done quite a bit, but it never seemed like much.

**S:** Well, I was thinking not so much in that direction, I was thinking more in terms of working with students to do internships and things.

**B:** Oh! Oh, I see! Yes! Certainly, one of the reasons I wanted to come to North Adams State College back in '76 was that I could set up an internship program in the department, although there was one in place already, but I did devote some effort to building the program. And I try to promote internships as much as possible. Unfortunately, it's kind of a hip-pocket operation because of resources and the kinds of courses being taught. I've worked with Myles Whitney on a service learning grant, which I think is a worthwhile idea, and currently have a couple of students who are involved in that. But that's part of the five-year plan, too, to get more people. We've had a lot of interns over the years and I basically tell students, freshman students, that they should be doing something like that, and that we could find them an internship anyplace in the world. We've had interns overseas, one of whom refused to come back! Actually decided to finish his studies in London.

**S:** But are there a significant number of students who do work in northern Berkshire?

**B:** Yes, not only here but in places such as Washington, D.C. We've had people work for public defenders, a Senator's office in Washington, the Congress, Boston, the State House in Albany and a lot of local government/local history kinds of internships. Those are extremely valuable. That is one way that we could distinguish ourselves better, devoting a little more attention to our internship program at the college. I'm a believer in internships.

**S:** Yes, and that goes back to your graduate work.

**B:** One of the positions that I turned down was going back to West Virginia to manage, coordinate and direct a public administration program. They offered me the job, although I never had a course in public administration. They liked my ideas. But I found budgeting extremely dull.

**S:** You mentioned, when we talked about the Canada courses, that students sometimes had a sense that not much in this country could

be changed. When you talk to your students about the future, do they talk at all about heroes they have, whom they'd like to emulate, and what kinds of people?

**B:** No, they don't talk about heroes. One of the reasons for doing the political socialization autobiography is to get people to realize that the whole idea of hero worship is based on false premises, one of which is that they are sort of perfect people—Lincoln freeing the slaves, which he didn't, George Washington chopping down the cherry tree, which he didn't! And sort of go back and look at some of those myths. In a way, those socialization myths of heroes set us up for disappointment and cynicism. Real people, real human beings can never conform to what they were told a President should be. I generally think politicians are, on the average, a cut above the rest of us, in terms of honesty, integrity. Students, as most Americans are now, are sarcastic and, again, victims of the era. I'm not sure how our '60s heroes would stand up under the scrutiny of the '90s.

**S:** Yes, but then you see this huge sort of media show about the death of John F. Kennedy, Jr. How do students relate to that?

**B:** I think, in a way, it is tying into the myth of his father, and there's a bit of a longing for that, so it's a reminder that that died, too. J.F.K. turns out to be a mythical giant for our students. He's sort of a modern Lincoln, in a way. There are all those attractive myths about him, even though there are attempts to puncture them. J.F.K., Jr.'s death is a reminder of what we think we've lost. We lost the naïveté of *Camelot*, a common purpose. Again, it wasn't necessarily there in reality, but at least the belief was!

**S:** A couple of more questions on teaching. You've been at this a long time. Currently, there's a lot of teacher bashing going on, cuts in public expenditures, particularly for state colleges and universities, and my question is, especially since we are looking at the context for the students, what keeps you going?

**B:** Well, in a way, I think teacher bashing has been directed more at our colleagues in high school and elementary school. I feel fairly distant from that. What keeps me going? Well, the e-mail I received three days ago out of the blue from a student who graduated in '92—whom I didn't know that well, but he just wanted to tell me about his life. He's pursuing a doctorate in multicultural education at the University of San Francisco. Those kinds of things keep me going. Maybe we do important things! Often we have impact on our students. I like ideas and I like the concept of being current with the world, but I also do generally enjoy almost every student I have. What else *would* I do? [Laughing] I ask myself that question every so often and look at career changes. I paused once to seriously ask myself that question, quite a while ago, back in the '70s. Whether it's luck, design, choice or fate, I am clearly right where I should be.

**S:** This is probably not a good term to use, given our age, but if you could think of an epitaph that someone might say about Bob Bence as a teacher, how would you like that to read? Say you got a paragraph.

**B:** All right. I think I would hope that people would recognize that I prize tolerance, I prize diversity, and that I was somewhat of a model for intellectual curiosity but, more importantly, acceptance and understanding.

**S:** Thanks very much.

*Thanks also to Karen DeOrdio, who faithfully transcribed this interview from the original tapes.*

## Letter

### To the Editor:

The new name and mission of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts have attracted good attention in the higher-education world. But gaining access to the intellectual life of a college is not easy for those outside. When I saw the Spring 2000 issue of *The Mind's Eye*, I was impressed. Here, it said, is a place that harbors imaginative, articulate and critical scholars. Here, it said, is a place that might really nurture the liberal arts.

Professor Colligan sent me this issue of the journal because it included a review essay she had written on "The Noble Savage in Chinese Film." This insightful piece opened my eyes to an aspect of Chinese film that connected with themes about representation that were familiar to me from my own research on colonial cultures in the Pacific islands. But I did not stop with Sumi's contribution. I turned next to the moving tribute to John M. C. Hess because of my work at The Carnegie Foundation on the varieties of academic careers. And then I kept reading—Diana Fox's excellent analysis of Simone de Beauvoir's influence on the anthropology of women, which could easily have been published in one of the field's own journals; Meera Tamaya's illuminating juxtaposition of two very dissimilar books on consciousness; Andrew Howitt's nice piece on Chinese gardens; the poetry. In other words, I started with the essay closest to my own interests and then read everything else. This is the great gift of journals like *The Mind's Eye*. They broaden the reach of one's experience, as the liberal arts are supposed to do.

I do hope that you will be able to continue publication of this fine journal. At a moment when North Adams appears to be on the cusp of a small renaissance with a new art museum and a "new" public liberal arts college, *The Mind's Eye* is a timely and lively contribution to the intellectual scene.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Taylor Huber, Senior Scholar, The Carnegie Foundation

## Contributors

**Robert Bence** has taught political science at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts since 1976. He has presented numerous papers, many of them on Canada and Canadian studies. In 1992, he was a visiting professor at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. His book reviews have appeared in *The Mind's Eye*, *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, *Africa Today* and *New Directions in Teaching*.

**Roselle K. Chartock** is a professor of education at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. She coedited the anthology *Can It Happen Again: Chronicles of the Holocaust* (1995) and is the recent author/editor of the text *Educational Foundations: An Anthology*. Her public access television program, "Conversations in Education," continues to be broadcast monthly throughout Berkshire County.

**Tony Gengareilly** teaches art history and museum studies at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. He has organized exhibitions for the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute and the Williams College Museum of Art. He has authored several articles and books, including a 1989 catalog, *The Prendergasts and the Arts and Crafts Movement*, and a 1996 monograph, *Distinguished Dissenters and Opposition to the 1919-1920 Red Scare*.

**Robin O'Sullivan** lives in Great Barrington and is a project coordinator and editorial assistant for Berkshire Publishing Group. Her creative nonfiction has appeared in *The Berkshire Review*. She has also covered South County news and arts for the *Berkshire Record*.

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**Maynard Seider** teaches sociology at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. He is the author of *A Year in the Life of a Factory*, based on his experiences in a California transformer factory. He has also produced a play, *The Sprague Years*, performed at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in 1995.



# THE MIND'S EYE

## Writer's Guidelines

While emphasizing articles of scholarly merit, *The Mind's Eye* focuses on a general communication of ideas of interest to a liberal arts college. We welcome expository essays as well as fiction, poetry and art from faculty and guest contributors. We publish twice a year. The deadline for the Fall issue is July 15. Deadline for the Spring issue is January 15.

Submissions should adhere to these guidelines:

1. Submit unpublished manuscripts both on paper and on disk, using either PC or MAC platform word-processing programs. Manuscripts should be typed double spaced. Your name, address, phone number and e-mail address, if available, should be listed on the cover sheet; your name should appear at the top of each page.
2. We will consider simultaneous submissions under the provision that the author notify us of this and contact us immediately if the material is accepted elsewhere.
3. If you wish your manuscript and disk returned, please enclose a return self-addressed envelope. If it is to be mailed off campus, attach sufficient postage. While we make every attempt to safeguard your manuscript and disk, we cannot be held responsible for their loss.
4. Use MLA or APA style, with in-text references, as appropriate to the content and disciplinary approach of your article (see MLA or APA stylebooks for guidelines).
5. While we will consider articles of unspecified length, preference is given to articles of under 20 pages.
6. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and accuracy.
7. We will consider one-color artwork (e.g., photographs, line drawings, woodcuts).
8. Payment will be made in contributor's copies.

Submit your manuscript to:

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